

January 11, 1950.

Dr. T. M. Sonneborn,
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Dear Tracy-

Thanks for your very kind letter. I think that you did quite right in preparing me for a possible interview, and you certainly did not unduly raise any expectations. I am, if anything, a little relieved that the matter went no further, so that I did not have to compromise my opposition, in principle, to such prizes, with the celerity, in practice, with which I would have accepted such a sum. This is not entirely sour grapes.

My feeling about the prizes is just that a) they are capable of inducing a certain amount of unnecessary resentment, as has happened in the Soc. Amer. Bact., and b) that they usually come at a time in a scientist's career when the cash is a secondary consideration. Until needs for scholarships, especially at the undergraduate level, are completely saturated, I would prefer to see awards go in that direction. I also think that prizes inevitably carry the implication of a comparison which has been unfavorable to some of the runners-up, and I just don't think that any men have the divine wisdom needed for the just administration of such awards.

Sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg